TASK 3
Here is an interview with the film director Werner Herzog. Read the text carefully. Then read statements 0-5, decide whether they are TRUE or FALSE

THE DARK COMEDY OF WERNER HERZOG
He has a reputation for being difficult and dangerous, his films celebrated for their nihilistic brilliance. Yet despite saying he never smiles, the German director can't stop laughing at himself – and the comedy in his work.

Perhaps it is because the German film-maker Werner Herzog has, over the years, during working hours, been shot at, hauled a steamboat over a mountain, threatened to kill his leading man, thrown himself on a cactus, been caught in the middle of a South American border war, taken a film crew to the lip of a volcano, and once, on camera, ate his shoe, he has a reputation for, let's say, reckless eccentricity.
Yet the reputation is difficult to marry with the warm, friendly and, quite frankly, hilarious gentleman I find in the lobby of a hotel in Beverly Hills.

But it is the reputation of Herzog's films that is perhaps the most misleading. The intimidating, even obfuscating aura of respect for his work among cinephiles magnifies its intelligence, but obscures its humour. It's a focus that mystifies Herzog, who takes great pride in his comedy (at one point, he lists his favourite funny sequences and can hardly speak from laughing) and is himself very funny, particularly about himself.

Yet his films are more aptly described as cheerfully nihilistic. Repeatedly, they suggest that although we are alone in a disinterested universe, glory is possible.
They celebrate the grandeur of follies, those who dare to do what few would dare to dream, whether its dragging a boat over a mountain (*Fitzcarraldo*), flying in a balloon over the rainforest (*The White Diamond*) or diving into unexplored rock crevices (*Cave of Forgotten Dreams*.) That Herzog himself does all of those things to make his movies has often been taken as proof that he, like his characters, is an egomaniacal daredevil.

But the aim of his films, he says, is "the illumination of something that is beyond sheer facts", what the New Yorker described as "the ecstatic truth". Does he experience that illumination when he is making his films? "Yes, I sometimes feel like the little girl in a fairytale," says the 68-year-old. "She steps out into the night sky and golden stars fall into her apron. These moments, when you have that shudder of something falling into your lap and you don't know how it happened – that happens."

Herzog is known for making films that are near impossible to make. But, as he explains in the documentary *Burden of Dreams*, abandoning a film because it presents difficulties would be akin to living "a life as a man without dreams". And just as the heroes of his films achieve their dreams, the audience also watches Herzog, with his moral seriousness, absolute determination and great good humour, achieve his. This is what makes his films the opposite of gloomy; they are pure triumphant pleasure.

"Every man," he says thoughtfully, "should pull a boat over a mountain once in his life." And then, once again, he laughs at himself.

STATEMENTS	TRUE	FALSE
0. Werner Herzog has put himself and others in danger during the filming of his movies.		
1. The fans of Herzog's films highly value the humour in his films.		
2. Herzog is most funny when describing his films.		
3. In Herzog's films, the characters undertake extremely challenging feats.		
4. Herzog tries to stay emotionally detached from his films.		
5. Herzog usually gives up on his projects when they become too difficult to complete.		

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